

# BELLO BIO BLOG

NO 6

## OXLEYAN PYGMY PEARCH

*NANOPERCA OXLEYANA*

The Oxleyan pygmy perch is one of the umbrella Species identified in Bellingen Shires Biodiversity Strategy. By protecting the habitat of this fish we will also protect many other species that make up the ecological community of its habitat.

It is a freshwater fish endemic to the coastal area of northern NSW and Southern Queensland. It is listed as endangered both in NSW and nationally.

### Identification

Oxleyan Pygmy Perch can grow to about 6cm but are usually seen at about 3.5 cm. They are light brown to olive in colour and can be distinguished by:

1. Small mouth reaching just below the eye
2. Blue ring around the eye
3. One deeply notched dorsal fin
4. Dark spot with orange rim at the base of the tail

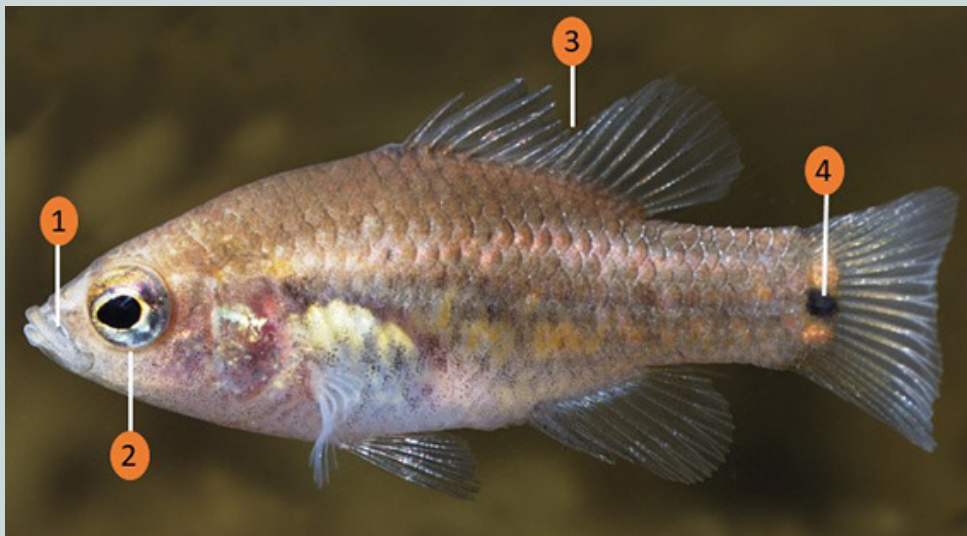


Image & description: Source [dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://dpi.nsw.gov.au)



# Bello Bio Blog No 6. Oxleyan Pygmy Perch (cont)

## Habitat

Oxleyan Pygmy Perch mostly occur in swamps, creeks and lakes of coastal Banksia-dominated coastal heath or 'walum' swamps. They prefer slow-moving or still waters.

They require plenty of in-stream aquatic vegetation or root-filled banks fringed with river-bank vegetation for shelter from predators, and foraging and spawning.

They tolerate tannin stained slightly acidic water.



Image: Photo of *Nannoperca oxleyana* (Oxleyan pygmy perch) - Esdaile, J., QPWS, 2009

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## Biology

The Oxleyan pygmy perch has not been well studied.

Breeding is mostly from October - May. During the breeding season males display red coloration on the body and the fins become darker. Females lay adhesive eggs amongst submerged vegetation, which protects them from currents and predation. It is thought that spawning is triggered when the water reaches 20 degrees.

Males are thought to be territorial. Adult fish forage in pairs, while juveniles tend to be in groups of 3-4. Juveniles reach maturity after 4-5 months.

Oxleyan pygmy perch have a diet of small insects and larvae, but may also eat microcrustaceans and algae.

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## Threats

- Habitat degradation due to increased sedimentation from coastal development, road construction and loss of river-bank vegetation
- Water quality decline due to nutrient enrichment and contamination from toxic substances in some areas
- Competition from introduced fish such as mosquito fish (*Gambusia holbrooki*)
- Collection for aquaria

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## More Information

A distribution map for the perch can be found [here](#).  
Report an Oxleyan Pygmy Perch Sighting [here](#).

[Oxleyan pygmy perch national recovery plan](#)  
[Oxleyan pygmy perch back ground paper](#)